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## BAC-10159

### Contact Information

Contact Name	Abencio Rael	Home Address	[REDACTED]
Preferred Phone	[REDACTED]	Home City	[REDACTED]
Preferred Email	[REDACTED]	Home State	[REDACTED]
Other Phone		Home Zip	[REDACTED]
Other Email		County	United States
DOB	[REDACTED]	Hispanic or Latino origin or Descent?	Yes
Gender	Male	Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic
Other Gender		Other Ethnicity	
		Tribal Affiliation	
		Salutation	Dr.
		Pronouns	He/Him/His

### Application

Status	Pending Confirmation	Council Resolution Number	
Notes			

### Board Information

Board Name	Denver Nonprofit Engagement Commission (DNEC)	Original Start Date	
		End Date	
		Other boards or commissions served	

### Work Information

Employer		Work Address	
Position		Work City	
Business Phone #		Work State	
Work Email		Work Zip	

### Additional Information

Work or home in Denver		Objection to appointment?	No
Are you a registered voter?		Special Information	
If so, what county?		Registered Lobbyist	No
Denver City Council District No	3	Conflict of Interest	No

Conflict of Interest  
Explanation

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### Education and General Qualifications

Name of High School		Name of Graduate School
Location of High School		Location of Graduate School
# of Years Attended High school		# of Years Attended Graduate School
Did you Graduate High School	Yes	Did you Graduate
		Graduate Major
Name of College		
Location of College		
# of Years Attended College		
Did you Graduate College		
Undergrad Major		

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### Reference Details

Reference Name #1		Reference Email #1
Reference Phone #1		Reference Address #1
Reference Name #2		Reference Email #2
Reference Phone #2		Reference Address #2
Reference Name #3		Reference Email #3
Reference Phone #3		Reference Address #3

Agree to a background check

Owner Esther Lee Leach

Created By Denver Integration, 7/10/2025, 12:45 PM

Last Modified By Sterling Simms, 5/11/2026, 11:46 AM

### Notes & Attachments

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#### IMG\_7311.jpeg

Type Attachment  
Last Modified Denver Integration  
Description [View file](#)

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#### A. Rael - CV.docx.pdf

Type Attachment  
Last Modified Denver Integration  
Description [View file](#)

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#### Dr. Rael Bio.docx

Type Attachment  
Last Modified Denver Integration  
Description [View file](#)

### Applicants History

5/11/2026, 11:46 AM

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User **Sterling Simms**

Action **Changed Status from In Progress to Pending Confirmation.**

7/10/2025, 1:12 PM

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User **Fatimah Ben-Masaud**

Action **Changed Status from New to In Progress.**

7/10/2025, 12:45 PM

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User **Denver Integration**

Action **Changed Contact Name from Abenicio Rael to Abenicio Rael. Created.**

# ABENICIO D. RAEL, Ed.D.



## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Accomplished, influential, dynamic, and mission-driven professional with over 20-years of experience leading highly effective teams and delivering innovative strategies to promote accountability around advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. Experienced in creating and directing strategic planning and assessment within institutions of higher education, nonprofit, and corporate organizations. Recognized for having an authentic, people-centered leadership style and for being a renowned expert in equity, mental health, inclusive workplace strategies, and culturally responsive support. Proven track record of influencing systemic changes to obtain favorable results. Nationally recognized speaker, facilitator, and educator.

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging, Justice and Equity
  - Executive leadership
- Change, growth, and trends management
  - Leadership and people development
  - Equity planning and implementation
    - Financial management
    - Program and project oversight
  - Strategic planning and implementation
  - Budget creation and implementation
- Driving employee, student and stakeholder engagement
- Community relations and engagement
  - Relationships and management
    - Public speaking
- Cross-functional and cross-site team management
  - Social and racial justice and systems level transformation
  - Curriculum and program development
  - Collaboration and relationship building
    - Leading organizational change
      - Fundraising
      - Grant writing

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**President & CEO**  
Scholars Unlimited

**August 2023 – Present**  
Denver, Colorado

Lead the organizations financial, operations, and program structures to fulfil the organizational mission. Leading the development and implementation of new policies that will ensure best practice for the organizations to work towards inclusive excellence with strategic planning in diversity, equity, inclusion and change management. Provide executive leadership, data analysis, and team development.

**Key Accomplishments include:**

- Cultivate agency and center experience of communities that have historically been disempowered in the workplace.

- Identified gaps in revenue projections, grant reimbursement and reconciliation. Lead the implementation of an accounting firm to rectify the issues and bring the organization back to financial stability.
- Oversaw the 22/23 fiscal year audit.
- Integrate diversity and inclusion best practices throughout the organization.
- Oversee financial operations, including budgetary processes, and ensured that sound financial controls were in place to come within budget.
- Supervise efforts to adapt fundraising strategies, tapping into foundations and corporations to increase fundraising.
- Lead the grant writing efforts for a successful award for federal and state grants.

**Adjunct Instructor**

Front Range Community College

**January 2023 – May 2023**

Westminster, Colorado

Designed and formulated an ethnic studies curriculum, as well as implemented course agenda, lesson plans, and activities to successfully meet course objectives. Engaged students with insightful and compelling classroom discussion of topics relevant to coursework and boosted learning and retention with a 100% pass rate.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- Defined and articulated goal learning outcomes, performance metrics, and changes to improve student learning.
- Integrated current events and cultural themes into course materials to contextualize subject matter and facilitate lifelong learning.
- Taught introductory level Ethnic Studies with focus on Colonialism, Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnicities.
- Collaborated with other departments to ensure students have access to all college resources.

**Chief of Staff**

Strive Prep

**January 2022 – August 2022**

Denver, Colorado

Position eliminated due to organization merger.

Joined the Strive Prep charter network to lead the Aspiring Anti-Racist practice for ten schools and one central office. Responsibilities included leading the network in the development and implementation of strategic initiatives to foster the Aspiring Anti-Racist vision. Supervised and strengthened a multidimensional team that supported the growth of the network as well as guided a thriving talent acquisition and human resources function for a 500+ employee organization. Managed department budget.

**Key accomplishments:**

- Led executive meetings to make informed business decisions, provide administrative support and evaluate progress toward goals and objectives.
- Supervised staff and participated in hiring, training and performance evaluations to establish and enforce policies and procedures for business functions.
- Collaborated with each principal to determine the full range of services provided by each program, set performance targets and program goals, and track results against targets and goals using personally developed quantitative indicators.

- Performed regular school visits to build relationships and develop analytical frameworks, data models and relevant insights to support prioritization, scoping and effective decision-making throughout organization.
- Oversaw development and implementation of the network's DEI plan based on its aspiring anti-racist vision.
- Developed and implemented organization's strategic plan by ensuring accountability measures and vision were embedded across all schools and network-wide.
- Collaborated with the STRIVE Prep Board by preparing and presenting data driven reports and served as an active participant in Board meetings.
- Guided senior executives, managers, and employees in identifying and eliminating barriers to workplace diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Analyzed and solved multifaceted problems that affected executive leaders and business initiatives.
- Guided the talent acquisitions team from 40% staffed to 100% staffed in 3 months.
- Oversaw department budgets and managed budgetary decisions in concert with other senior leaders and consistent with overall institutional goals.
- Motivated staff participation in annual fundraising drives, events, and activities.
- Devised creative ways to engage, cultivate, and retain donors, volunteers, and stakeholders.
- Strengthened a multidimensional team that supported the growth of the network, which included fiscal oversight, planning, assessment, and evaluation.
- Successfully wrote grant proposals for the awarding of professional development and alumni programming sustainability and oversaw award spending.

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***Executive Director of Equity and Inclusion***

Front Range Community College

**January 2021 – December 2021**

Westminster, Colorado

Joined the community college as the inaugural executive director to focus on a cultural climate shift with equity at the center. Responsibilities included leading the organization in the development and implementation of strategic initiatives to foster diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracism. Oversaw the research, data analysis, development, implementation of Hispanic Serving Institution task force and initiatives.

***Key accomplishments:***

- Served as a change-agent and a member of the college President's cabinet at FRCC to provide leadership for professional development, programming, and initiatives that create an equitable and inclusive environment to promote student success.
- Worked closely with organizational leadership and board of directors to strategically affect equitable operational direction.
- Developed a framework that shaped the equity vision for a college-wide strategic plan. Identified key performance indicators for strategic plan.
- Spearheaded development and execution of FRCC strategic plan.
- Supported Human Resources in implementing and assessing programs and policies that foster a work culture of collaboration and inclusion to increase morale and reduce turnover.
- Successfully wrote grant proposals for the awarding of \$200,000 to support faculty equity development and oversaw award spending.
- Initiated the development of the plan for a DEI vision that aligned the college's mission and strategic goals.
- Led the 26-member equity council with initiatives related to equity and inclusion, analyzing data to inform leadership decisions, and creating a culture of inclusion.

- Developed, executed, and presented monthly reports to the Front Range Community College Advisory Board of Directors.
- Oversaw department budgets and managed budgetary decisions in concert with other senior leaders and consistent with overall institutional goals.
- Formulated successful grant proposals and oversaw award spending.
- Motivated staff participation in annual fundraising drives, events, and activities.
- Devised creative ways to engage, cultivate, and retain donors, volunteers, and stakeholders.

**Director of Latinx Student Services**

University of Colorado Denver

**March 2017 – December 2020**

Denver, Colorado

Joined the university as the Director of Latinx Services to increase retention and persistence of Latinx students.

Developed CU Denver’s signature Latinx retention program and raised \$150,000 to sustain the program for 2 years. Increased Latinx student retention and the largest Latinx graduation rate in the history of the institution in 2019. Managed 6 budgets valued at over half of a million dollars.

**Key accomplishments:**

- Provided leadership for development of the department's strategic plan in alignment with the Chancellor's strategic initiatives.
- Led Equity Plan development process for the Interim Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Inclusion. Wrote and foregrounded Equity Plan using scholarly research and data.
- Analyzed the office's business plan, identified inefficiencies in existing processes, and assisted individuals with addressing performance deficiencies.
- Supported the creation and implementation of departmental and financial policies by collaborating with other members of the leadership team.
- Tracked and evaluated student, faculty, and staff engagement for programming modifications and improvements.
- Optimized student educational strategies with clear advice on course choices, progression and career options.
- Consulted with government regulatory and licensing agencies to verify institutional conformance with applicable standards.
- Strengthened student service operations by aligning processes to capitalize on new educational trends.
- Actively raised \$200,000 for the Latinx Undergraduate Leadership Advancement (LULA) program to establish a sustainable operating budget.
- Actively raised \$100,000 for the Latinx Student Services Undocumented Scholarship supporting undocumented students
- Established strong relationship bonds with community leaders, non-profit leaders, and political leaders to advocate for the advancement and wellbeing of the Latino community.
- Stewarded financial gifts to advance scholarships and sustain retention programs.

**Director, CU Pre-Health Scholars Program**

University of Colorado—Anschutz Medical Campus

**September 2008 – February 2017**

Denver, Colorado

Directed the equity and access efforts for marginalized and first-generation students interested in a pre-health curriculum. Served over 150 students each year and held a consistent 100% graduation rate and a 98% college matriculation rate. Managed program budget of \$150,000 to maximize annual projections and submitted budget for approval. Secured monthly spending to ensure successful program outcomes without deficit. Accurately recorded and reported all financials in a timely manner.

**Key accomplishments:**

- Served as director responsible for strategic planning of developing and implementing program policies and operations. Developed and implemented pre-collegiate/pre-health model.
- Recruited, hired and trained all staff, provided direct supervision, ongoing staff development and continuing education to employees.
- Developed and implemented program and instructor/facilitator evaluations to measure qualitative and quantitative data in regard to program performance and teacher/curriculum effectiveness. Delivered findings to upper-level administration to demonstrate program effectiveness.
- Analyzed research and data collection for Upward Bound Grant.
- Collaboratively wrote for successful awarding of the Upward Bound Grant.
- Created customized course pathways, working with faculty and staff and families to assess and meet student needs.
- Spearheaded and implemented new projects to expand scope of engagement.

## EDUCATION

<b>University of Colorado Denver – Denver, Colorado</b>	<b>May 2022</b>
Doctor of Education   Higher Education Leadership for Education Equity Focus: Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Organizational Culture	
<b>University of Colorado Denver – Denver, Colorado</b>	<b>May 2016</b>
Master of Education   School Counseling	
<b>University of Colorado Denver – Denver, Colorado</b>	<b>December 2006</b>
Bachelor of Arts   Psychology	
<b>Community College of Denver</b>	<b>2002 – 2004</b>
General Studies Coursework	
<b>University of Guadalajara – Jalisco, Mexico</b>	<b>Spring 2002</b>
Semester Abroad   Cultural and Spanish language immersion experience	

## PROFESSIONAL SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

<b>College and University Professional Association for Human Resources</b>	<b>June 2022</b>
Breckenridge, CO: Presenter – “Weaving DEI in the Fabric of your Organization”	
<b>Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design</b>	<b>April 2022</b>
Virtual (3 Sessions): Presenter/Facilitator – “Introduction to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” “Concepts of Community Cultural Wealth” “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Pedagogy”	
<b>Colorado Council on High School/College Relations</b>	<b>December 2019</b>
Colorado Springs, CO: Presenter – “Hispanic v. Latinx: Does Identity Affect Persistence”	
<b>Colorado Community College System – Student Leadership Conference</b>	<b>November 2019</b>
Arapahoe Community College: Presenter – “Leadership in Latinx Communities”	
<b>Colorado Education Services and Development Association</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
Avon, Colorado: Presenter – “Positive Psychology in the Workplace”	
<b>Society for Advancement of Chicano/Hispanics &amp; Native Americans in Science</b>	<b>October 2016</b>
Long Beach, California: Presenter – “Developing a Plan”	
<b>First Generation College Day – Colorado Mountain College</b>	<b>October 2016</b>
Leadville, Colorado: Presenter – “Preparing to Become a Successful College Student”	

## PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATION

Best, L., Rael, A., Schulman, M., & Sobanet, J., (2020). The learning district: State and local pressures experienced by shared a campus. *Cases on leadership for educational Equity* (1). DOI: <https://thing.pressbooks.pub/clejhe/chapter/volume1-2/>

## AWARDS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND ACCOLADES

- 2018 – Appointed to Denver Latino Commission by Mayor Michael Hancock
- 2017 – Awarded Certificate of Executive Leadership from Latino Leadership Institute
- 2019 – Appointed Chair of the Denver Latino Commission by Mayor Michael Hancock
- 2016 – Rookie of the Year - Colorado Educational Services and Development Association

## BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

### STRIVE Prep

December 2020 – December 2022

- Provided leadership around diversity, equity, inclusion to the board of directors and made DEI recommendations to the organization
- Assisted with fundraising efforts that contributed to financial sustainability

### Denver Latino Commission

July 2017 – July 2021

- Commissioner (Mayoral Appointee)
- Co-Chair (2019/2020)
  - Oversaw, recommended, and influenced policies that affected the Denver Latino community while maintaining and encouraging a constituent focus
  - Responded to state or local legislative issues affecting the Latino community
  - Advised the Mayor of the City of Denver on suggested political positions
  - Responded to emerging issues identified by the mayor
  - Led and implemented the first Denver Latino Commission conference in 2019

### Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of LatinX (CoCEAL)

June 2018 – July 2019

- Executive Board, Secretary
  - Kept meeting minutes and historical data
  - Updated membership information by redesigning Qualtrics survey, kept a spreadsheet of membership data, and updated information in the database/newsletter system
  - Devised correspondence to members about updates to policy and other stances to which the Coalition responds

### Colorado Educational Services and Development Association

June 2016 – July 2018

- Treasurer (2017/2018)
  - Managed and maintained all financials
  - Created and submitted monthly financial reports
  - Oversaw revenue of membership, grants, and scholarship distribution

### Colorado Council on High School/College Relations

October 2016 – July 2018

- Annual Conference Planning Committee
  - Determined appropriate breakout sessions, keynote speakers and location annual for conference
  - Assisted with marketing and promotion of CCHS/CR annual conference

Dr. Abenicio D. Rael is the President and CEO of Scholars Unlimited, bringing over 20 years of experience in education with a deep commitment to equity and inclusion. A third-generation Coloradoan raised in Denver's Northside and a proud product of Denver Public Schools, Dr. Rael was the first in his family to graduate from college and earn a doctorate. He holds a Doctorate in Higher Education Leadership for Educational Equity from the University of Colorado Denver.

Throughout his career, Dr. Rael has held influential roles including Chief of Staff at Strive Prep, Executive Director of Equity and Inclusion at Front Range Community College, and Director of Latinx Student Services at CU Denver. His work centers on fostering inclusive environments, supporting underserved communities, and advancing educational access.

Outside of his professional life, Dr. Rael is a devoted father of three and enjoys Colorado's outdoors through fishing, hunting, and camping with his multigenerational family.